

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method, comprising the steps of:

providing a database;

registering manufacturers who provide coupons for their manufactured goods in said database, wherein each registered manufacturer is provided with a manufacturer's account;

registering retailers who sell said manufactured goods in said database, wherein each registered retailer is provided with a retailer's account;

registering consumers who may buy said manufactured goods in said database, wherein each registered consumer is provided with a numbered consumer account and an account card that contains said numbered consumer account;

providing a website where said registered manufacturers can post coupons and said registered consumers can select coupons, wherein said coupons selected by said registered consumers are assigned to consumer accounts for those consumers in said database;

establishing a telecommunications link between a registered retailer and said database when a registered consumer purchases a product at a registered retailer and submits said account card at checkout, wherein data is exchanged through said link that determines if the consumer has previously selected a coupon for said product at said website; and

discounting said product at the registered retailer by said coupon if said coupon is present in the consumer account for that consumer.

2. The method according to Claim 1, wherein said step of establishing a telecommunications link includes providing a card reading machine at each of said registered retailers, wherein each said card reading machine reads a consumer account from said account card and queries said database regarding selected coupons in that consumer account.

3. The method according to Claim 1, further including the step of charging each registered manufacturer who posts a coupon on said website.

4. The method according to Claim 3, wherein said step of charging each registered manufacturer includes charging each registered manufacturer a fee proportional to how many coupons posted by that registered manufacturer are selected by consumers.

5. The method according to Claim 1, further including the step of reimbursing registered retailers for coupons redeemed using consumer account cards.

6. A method comprising the steps of:

providing a website where manufacturers can post electronic coupons and consumers can select posted electronic coupons;

providing a database that stores electronic coupons selected by consumers;

establishing a telecommunications link between a retailer and said database when a consumer purchases a product from that retailer;

downloading data regarding an electronic coupon selected by a consumer from said database to said retailer over said link if said consumer is purchasing a product for which said consumer has previously selected

an electronic coupon at said website, wherein said retailer can honor said coupon.

7. The method according to Claim 6, further including the step of registering consumers who want to select electronic coupons from said website and providing each registered consumer with a card.

8. The method according to Claim 7, wherein said step of establishing a telecommunications link includes the sub-steps of:

providing a card reading machine capable of exchanging data with said database; and

scanning said card of a consumer through said card reading machine.

9. The method according to Claim 8, wherein said step of downloading data includes the sub-steps of:

downloading data regarding an electronic coupon to said card reading machine;

exchanging said data between said card reading machine and a cash register; and

comparing said coupon to products being purchased by a consumer;

deducting a coupon value if a coupon corresponds to a product being purchased.

10. The method according to Claim 6, further including the step of charging each manufacturer who posts a coupon on said website.

11. The method according to Claim 10, wherein said step of charging each manufacturer includes charging each manufacturer a fee proportional to how many coupons posted by that manufacturer are selected by consumers.

12. The method according to Claim 6, further including the step of reimbursing retailers for coupons redeemed.

13. The method according to Claim 6, further including the step of registering manufacturers who provide coupons for their products in said database, wherein each registered manufacturer is provided with a manufacturer's account and enabling only registered manufacturers to post

electronic coupons at said website.

14. The method according to Claim 13, further including the step of registering retailers who sell said products of said registered manufacturers, wherein each registered retailer is provided with a retailer's account and enabling only registered retailers the ability to redeem said electronic coupons.

15. The method according to Claim 13, further including the step of registering consumers, wherein each registered consumer is provided with a numbered consumer account and an account card that contains said numbered consumer account.